

Curb on C.I.A.

PERSON

An End to Covert Aid

When the Central Intelligence Agency's role in subsidizing the overseas activities of some student, labor and other private American organizations was disclosed six weeks ago, the general reaction was that such C.I.A. activity had been a mistake. "I think the C.I.A. has a job to do, but it can do it without using [the] labor movement," said A.F.L.-C.I.O. President George Meany.

President Johnson ordered a halt to C.I.A. financing of the National Student Association, whose links to the C.I.A. were at the center of the exposé. He also appointed a committee consisting of Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, as chairman, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare John Gardner, and C.I.A. Director Richard Helms, to review the whole problem of financing groups that combat Communist propaganda and activity abroad.

In issuing its report last week, the committee argued—taking the National Student Association as an example—that the N.S.A. sought funds from the C.I.A. in the early 1950's because, as a leftist though anti-Communist group, it could not get the money from other sources, private or governmental, in view of the prevailing political climate of the period. More recently, however, the report concluded, "[the] American public . . . has become increasingly aware of the importance of the complex forms of international competition between free societies and Communist states. . . . Hence it is increasingly possible for organizations like N.S.A. to seek support for overseas activities from open sources."

Accordingly, the committee made two recommendations:

First, it recommended a new policy under which "no Federal agency shall provide any covert financial assistance or support, direct or indirect, to any of the nation's educational or private organizations." The committee said exceptions should be made when required by "overriding national security interests," as determined by the Secretaries of State and

Defense, but added that none of the present subsidy programs fall into this category.

Second, since "free institutions continue to be under bitter, continuous attack" abroad, the committee recommended creation of a "public-private mechanism to provide public funds openly for overseas activities of organizations which are adjudged deserving, in the national interest, of public support."

President Johnson adopted both recommendations, ordering rapid liquidation of covert C.I.A. financing of private voluntary organizations, and naming Secretary of State Dean Rusk to head a new study of what form the proposed "public-private mechanism" should take.

The other members of the Rusk committee have not yet been named. When they are, they will have to resolve some basic problems.

One of these will be how to keep the private, voluntary institutions free from Government direction, so there is no question in foreign countries that the organizations are free. Another problem is how Congress, which presumably will openly appropriate funds for the program, can retain some watchdog rule over public money.

The Katzenbach committee anticipated these questions by citing the experience of the British Council—an institution which receives 90 per cent of its funds from the British Government but remains pretty independent and under predominantly private control as it operates libraries, teaches English, and finances British cultural and scientific delegations overseas. But there is an added question to which this British model has little relevance: What about the more direct political action financed by the C.I.A., such as the reported use of an American labor union to foment strikes against Cheddi Jagan's Marxist regime in Guyana?

In recommending an American system the Rusk committee will have the opportunity to look at the problem narrowly—as simply the question of finding new financing for organizations helped by the C.I.A.—or it can broaden its inquiry. The broad approach would provide an opportunity to look into the whole range of Government

and private activities overseas, from the State Department's exchange program to the Fulbright scholarships, from the United States Information Agency's libraries to its radio programs, and it should give it an opportunity to develop an all-embracing philosophy of how a free society should be represented in foreign lands.